

Panel votes 'contra' aid after GOP yields on control

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WASHINGTON — The White House and the Republican-controlled Senate, facing stiff opposition from House Democrats, yesterday gave up their fight to put the CIA in charge of new humanitarian aid to Nicaraguan *contra* rebels.

Instead, a House-Senate conference committee agreed that the money would be funneled through another agency — probably the State Department's Agency for International Development — and also compromised

on a smaller amount of money for the rebels than the administration originally sought.

The decision to funnel the aid through an agency other than the CIA amounted to a setback for President Reagan. The President's advisers had urged that the funds be channeled through the CIA — the agency that organized and guided the *contras* from late 1981 until assistance was cut off in October.

Even so, final passage of the bill would mark the first time since covert military assistance was ex-

hausted last summer that Congress has yielded to Reagan administration requests for immediate aid to the forces fighting Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Although the CIA and the Defense Department will be barred from administering the new *contra* aid package, the agency still will be allowed to provide the *contras* with intelligence information regarding the location of Sandinista military units and perhaps even advice on military targeting.

Besides going along with the House in prohibiting the CIA from distributing the money, the administration and Senate conferees agreed to the House-passed figure of \$27 million through next March. The Senate and the White House originally had wanted \$38 million through September 1986.

The agreement came during the third day of negotiations over a \$13 billion supplemental appropriations bill whose approval had been held up by the disagreement over aid to the *contras*.

The bill now goes back to both

houses for final approval and then to Reagan for his signature. Aid could begin flowing to the rebels as early as August.

Both houses agreed to a restoration of aid — which was cut off last year because of congressional anger over CIA involvement in mining the harbors of Nicaragua and production of an assassination manual — in separate votes last month. But the funding level and the method of disbursement had not been agreed upon until yesterday.

The conferees agreed that the new aid would be distributed in three \$9 million installments at 90-day intervals.

The second and third installments of the aid would be released after quarterly reports by the President to Congress on whether the *contras* are accomplishing their goals and are respecting human rights.

The House legislation specifically prohibits the delivery of vehicles, weapons, weapons systems and ammunition to the *contras*. The Senate version would have allowed trucks, jeeps and perhaps helicopters.